

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence School Committee

East Providence City Hall, 145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

October 9, 2012

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. School Committee members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Ryan Tellier, Chrissy Rossi, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Dr. John V. DeGoes, Interim Superintendent, Attorney Robert Silva and Attorney Andrew Thomas.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag & Moment of Silence observed in memory of Shontelle Adams.

Student/Staff Recognition

Townie Pride Parade Participants – Dr. DeGoes acknowledged and praised the building principals, teachers, students, and parents who attended the event last week to promote community and school spirit.

Dr. DeGoes was informed of a grant received from the Highlander Charter School and East Providence elementary schools. Mrs. Beth

Salzillo, Curriculum Coordinator, explained that the grant will provide \$170,000 over the next two years; East Providence partnered last summer with Oldham and Whiteknact Schools participating in a pilot to integrate literacy policies into the schools; incredible gains were made in literacy which helps in closing gaps for students and continued growth is anticipated over next two years.

Student Liaison Report – Joshua Concepcion presented report on high school activities and events.

Report on City of East Providence Budget Commission

Dr. DeGoes reported that he presented three items to the Budget Commission as directed by the School Committee; however, the Budget Commission took no action on two items and on the matter of consolidation of legal counsel, had comments about the School Committee as a body not going along with the legal counsel consolidation. Mrs. Rossi pointed out that the School Committee was diligent two years ago about getting the best legal counsel at an affordable hourly rate and that the School Committee, under Title 16, is entitled to its own legal representation; she felt that current legal does a great job at a great price and also has valuable institutional knowledge of over ten years, which is priceless since many of the School Committee members will be leaving.

Mr. Tsonos added that the next School Committee may decide to send out a Request for Proposals to see what opportunities may be out there for legal services. A Budget Commission member stated

the he was appalled that the School Committee would not even consider consolidating legal counsel, but the former School Committee and City Council paid approximately \$1.3 million to their legal team. He thanked Mr. Silva and his partners for what they have done for the School Department. Mr. Tsonos was appalled when he was elected to School Committee about administrators who were given last minute contracts that tied the hands of this School Committee and put them in the financial position they are in today; he agreed with Mrs. Rossi and the RI Department of Education opinion that the School Department should have separate legal counsel from the City.

Mr. Furtado stated that the School Committee provided a written report regarding the necessity of the School Department to have separate legal counsel and the School Committee was amicable to a Request for Proposals for separate counsel for the School Department and City; only 23% of legal representation was for schools and the rest is for the city. He felt that this School Committee has cut the legal bills in half and has done its due diligence; he thought this was just a turf war.

Public Comment I

Laurie Brown, Co-Chair of the East Providence Local Advisory Committee was appalled by a quote by Mr. O'Keefe of the Budget Commission in a local newspaper regarding special education which she felt pitted general education against special education and that he is biased and should be removed. She questioned who is representing children on this Budget Commission and she felt that

these comments were clearly inappropriate; she asked what could be done about it; the budget has been cut and many parents are coming to the meetings, because they feel their children are not getting the support they need; she blames the budget cuts in special education which are unconscionable; she expressed concerns about special education students.

Mr. Tsonos commented that Mr. O'Keefe of the Budget Commission speaks strictly as a finance person and there will be other budget cuts; the only choice is to speak at the Budget Commission meetings; the Budget Commission will make all the decisions any way. On October 18, comments can be made about the budget at the Budget Commission hearing.

Mary Teixeira, a teacher at Silver Spring School, was not aware that the public could speak at Budget Commission meetings; Mr. Tsonos noted that the October 18th meeting is for public comment on the budget only. Mary thanked everyone who served on this School Committee for providing the opportunity for anyone to speak during Public Comment about any matter and for civil discourse.

She believes this is a critical time in the city with an oversight committee; people do not feel they have a voice; people should be able to say what is important for their children; people in the city are concerned but do not organize; people need to work together to come up with solutions. She spoke about a personal experience with one of her students as his third grade teacher at Silver Spring and how

parents advocate for their special needs children. She felt that the schools are being run as a business model rather than advocating for children.

John Pangborne spoke about getting the sports programs back; he requested that the Superintendent assist regarding questions about transportation, volunteer coaches, and other legal issues; he would like to put kids back into sports this season.

Dr. DeGoes stated that he was buoyed by the fundraising efforts of Project 106, but there are a number of legal questions to research, such as the liability of schools if students are transported in private vehicles; he is pursuing answers to these questions in order to not put the School Department, School Committee or parents in any jeopardy. Mr. Pangborne noted that Mr. O'Keefe said the community could support school sports; some families cannot afford approximately \$60 needed to play; this cut surprised many people; he hoped to get started with an outlet for kids to be involved with sports rather than just hanging around doing nothing.

Tim Conley, 194 Terrace Ave, agreed that the comments by Mr. O'Keefe were disconcerting; he is running for School Committee in Ward 4 and is the father of a special needs child; he felt the comments were mean spirited, poor public policy, and pits one group against another. He felt that the Budget Commission did not reflect the opinion of the community; his son went through early

intervention services with Meeting Street; the special education goal is to help the most vulnerable; this is not what the community expects; his son has a future compared to what they told him his life would be like back in 2002. Budget Commission has taken away the values of the community while balancing the budget.

Mr. Tsonos commented there are no checks and balances on the Budget Commission; Judge Flanders had a Federal Court Judge to oversee decisions in Central Falls; what the Budget Commission says is what we have been facing for a year; this School Committee has tried to change their minds; next year, School Department will be further challenged with the budget.

Interim Superintendent's Report

FY2012-13 Budget - Dr. DeGoes noted that the School Committee received a detailed budget in the amount of \$71,060,251 and that Mr. Malcolm Moore, Finance Director, was present to answer any questions. He noted that the budget item also appears on the agenda under Action Items if the School Committee decides to vote to approve it.

Discussion: Mrs. Rossi asked why the budget was reduced by \$4 Million and where the cuts were made.

Mr. Moore explained the school deficit reductions: surplus to pay off cumulative deficit; \$1 million reduction in benefits; reduced staff;

negotiating terms of universal policy; negotiating nine contracts for a uniform plan; reduction of special education costs from \$9 million to \$8 million. He and Mr. Cimino verified the numbers; budgeted \$9.3 this year; 2% turnover when not replacing someone. Mr. Moore stated there would be two public hearings on October 4th and October 18th at which anyone could speak on the budget; Budget Commission requested that salary and benefits be listed by school with a narrative, organizational chart, and the status of what happened over the course of the year.

Mrs. Rossi noted that the School Department is debt free. Mr. Moore confirmed that the City wrote a check to wipe out the school deficit this year as of 10/31/12. Mrs. Rossi noted there is no money allocated for facilities. Mrs. Rossi questioned maintenance of effort; requested the Superintendent review this.

Mr. Moore noted that the Budget Commission has rights and responsibilities under the law to balance the budget for the City and Schools; he looks forward to getting procedures and policies in place. In response to a question from Mr. Tellier regarding salaries for administrators; Mr. Moore stated that he met with Mr. Fratiello and staff to look over the budget prepared by former school Finance Director; allowances were made for vacant positions; they are sure that all positions are budgeted.

Mr. Tellier questioned if funds were budgeted for pending legal

issues; Mr. Moore stated that there is no contingency to address this; at the end of the audit, legal counsel is asked to report any outstanding law suits, but they cannot quantify this.

Mr. Furtado asked how the debt service was reduced; in the city budget where did the deficit come out of? Mr. Moore suggested reviewing the audit; transferred funds to School Department to zero it out; one time transfer of money.

Mrs. Rossi commented that the BPR by the Budget Commission (Budget Planning Report) does not match the budget. Mr. Moore stated that there are many changes in the BPR and it is a work in progress; he hoped to wind up negotiations by November 1st.

Mr. Tsonos commented that it is the intent of the Budget Commission not to increase taxes and to go forward on November 1st with 2012-13 budget. He asked about closing one or two schools next year and how this budget affects full day Kindergarten. Mr. Moore believes there will be half day Kindergarten and closing and selling administration building; there may be some schools closed. Further discussion regarding reductions in the budget.

Mrs. Rossi requested clarification by Budget Commission line by line in the budget. Mr. Moore will provide that information.

Building Committee/Facilities Report (Ed Catelli) – No Report

Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence;

RESIGNATIONS

John Craig Assistant Principal-MMS-Effective 10/04/2012

Tamara Sexton School Nurse-1:1/Waddington-Effective 09/28/2012

John Gorham Head Swimming Coach-EPHS- Effective 09/16/2012

**Jay Clancy Freshman Asst. Football Coach-EPH- Effective 12/13
School Year**

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Gary Faragalli Girls Basketball Coach-MMS-Effective 2012/2013
School Year**

PARENTAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

**Michelle Chamberlain Special Ed/Resource Teacher-KH-Effective
10/01/2012**

Michelle Chamberlain (1yr) Head Teacher-KH-Effective 09/26/2012

Michelle Chamberlain (1yr) Rtl Co-Specialist-KH-Effective 09/26/2012

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

**Kathleen Bickford Librarian-Waddington-Approximately 10/09/2012-13
weeks**

**Lian Furtado Special Ed Teacher-EPHS-Approximately 10/17/2012-13
weeks**

**Jennifer Marcello Occupational Therapist-Special
Education-Approximately 11/7/2012-13 weeks**

Consent Agenda

**Approval of Minutes – Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve the minutes of
the meetings held on August 14, 2012 and August 27, 2012, seconded
by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.**

**Finance Report – Dr. DeGoes expected a balanced budget by the end
of the fiscal year, October 31, 2012; with two months left in the fiscal
year; 86% of allocations have been expended.**

Action Items

Personnel Appointments:

Christy Cipriano School Nurse-Hennessey/Meadowcrest-Effective 10/09/2012

Kelly Vasey (one yr) Head Teacher-Kent Heights-Effective 2012/2013 School Year

Karen Conte (one yr) Rtl Co-Specialist-Effective 2012/2013 School Year

Jay Clancy Asst. Football Coach-EPHS-Effective 2012/2013 School Year

William Tilley Freshman Asst. Football Coach-EPHS-Effective 2012/2013 School Year

Motion: Mr. Furtado to approve, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0.

Recalls

Nicole DiFilippo Guidance Counselor – High School

Leann Ayotte Teacher Assistant – TBD

Courtney Teixeira Teacher Assistant - TBD

Motion to approve by Mr. Tellier, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Requisitions – Bill List

Warrant #

1259 10/2/12 \$ 335,506.53

1260 10/2/12 \$ 52,902.21

1261 10/3/12 \$ 252,280.18

1262 10/3/12 \$ 24,447.00

(Vouchers over \$25,000 as per attached report approved by the Budget Commission).

Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.

Requests for Home Schooling- Motion to approve requests by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

FY 2012-2013 Budget – It was decided that no vote would be taken at this time; Mrs. Rossi felt that the School Committee did not have sufficient information to vote on a budget at this time.

Posting of Director of Pupil Personnel Services Position – Motion by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola to post this position. Vote 5-0.

Appointment of Special Education Program Coordinator Position –

Tabled to next meeting by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Furtado; further information requested.

Old Business

Clarification of Building Use Policy - Mrs. Rossi asked to send the policy to all principals; exceptions on Page 9 spell out fees for city based groups; there is a need to clarify the policy; these are mostly our own students and the only fees assessed would be \$5 per player/roster indoors and \$2/per player outdoors; non-profit status to be included with application; since there are custodians in most buildings, there are no extra fees in buildings where custodians are already on duty. Ryan Tellier explained that the \$150 application fee was waived for the per player/roster fee; he felt a procedure is needed and that one person should be designated to handle applications to eliminate each school handling it differently; possibly the Facilities Office could be responsible for it.

New Business

Visual Support Classroom at Meadowcrest (Mrs. Abatecola) Dr. DeGoes stated there were no cuts to this program to date; the teacher thought the day was too long for some students and suggested a half day; this was not recommended by Central Office and would not take place unless designated in an IEP meeting with parents.

Mr. Furtado requested information regarding the high school transition program; the School Support Visit Report noted inconsistencies. Dr. DeGoes reported that the district is working on the recommendations in the report and it should be completed within a month or two.

PTA Reports – Ryan Tellier reported on a Walk for Fun Event on October 27th sponsored by the Kent Heights PTA; money raised will be used to enhance the music and gym programs.

Heather Foley of the Orlo Avenue PTA reported that grass was installed this week and students are enjoying the playground; volunteers still needed for this project.

Mr. Tsonos thanked the Lions Club for their assistance with vision screening in the schools.

Public Comment II

Lisa Lavin, parent of a child at Meadowcrest stated that she received conflicting information at the end of September that the program was being cut; not sure if it was coming from the team or administration. She sent a letter to the School Committee; she believes there is no justification or data to support reduction of time in the program; she trusts the staff at Meadowcrest and believes in them.

Dr. Degoes answered that there would no savings in cutting the program; possibility is that the teacher thought half day would be a better situation.

Shannon, parent of a child Meadowcrest, stated there was no discussion of half time and there would be no benefit to changing the program three weeks into the school year; she did not believe this idea came from the teacher; she sees this as a unilateral decision; not looking at children individually.

Dr. DeGoes stated that although he appreciated her position, sometimes schools make decisions; there would be no financial gain from the decision; he does not believe it will happen anyway.

Mr. Tsonos commented that parents are upset as a result of what may be poor communication.

Laurie Brown questioned the \$9 million budget and the funds from Medicaid and the IDEA Grant. Discussion : Finance Director, Mr. Moore, explained that the \$9 million is offset with that revenue; schools receive the money from the state and the grants, which is rolled into the general fund. Mrs. Brown stated that parents have to sign off on Medicaid and she assumed all the money went to special needs children.

Mr. Tsonos stated that this reporting was noted in the last three

audits as lacking.

Mr. Moore stated that he does not think the funds have to be accounted for separately; money is in the general fund; the city will be putting in a new accounting system soon, which will make this easier to track; he felt the situation should be rectified soon.

BJ DeCresenzo stated that she has background in this area and can clarify some of the issues; we took away a class at Meadowcrest; retiree in charge of the school this year. She believed that the National Accreditation is in the name of former Supervisor and is now gone . She questioned Mr. Moore about the \$9 million budget and where \$1.8 million will come from. She stated that an IEP cannot be written for placement; Bradley got a good deal, but she expected more savings. She advised parents not to change placements; the decisions should be based on facts, truths, not used to belittle.

Izilda Teves asked if the gym at Orlo Avenue School had been cleaned yet; parents noted there was four inches of dust on light fixtures while they were there cleaning windows, which is not acceptable at Orlo or any other school. She thanked Ed Catelli for all of his efforts in getting work done at the school.

Fred Rybka questioned the end of all day Kindergarten and closing of Oldham School.

Mrs. Rossi said the plan to close Oldham School and bussing of 170 students elsewhere is unacceptable; she will not agree to close that school; the former Interim Superintendent advised her there was no plan in place; arrangements were made to accommodate full day K; Oldham should be the last place we look at closing, since kids will be littered throughout the city; she felt there was no due diligence done on this idea.

Mr. Rybka asked if a cost analysis had been done for the 180 parents; he feels it is not right to shift these kids. Mr. Moore stated that proposed reductions will be in the BPR with a narrative to substantiate; he will look for an answer; there is a process for closing schools.

Mrs. Rossi stated this is on the BPR as gone and the process to close schools can be dictated. Mr. Rybka commented that the Riverside people won't even know about this.

Mary Teixeira asked about the time frame for closing a school. Mrs. Rossi stated that a school employee was told not to give her the information when she requested it.

Ron Warr, a parent of three children at Oldham School, stated that the redistricting should be done over the whole city rather than at one school; he believes that Oldham is a great school and closing it would not be a good idea.

Mr. Tsonos noted that he would like to invite the new School Committee members to attend the November meeting.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to convene in Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1); Collective Bargaining R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2) ; Litigation/Pending Litigation -R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a)(2), seconded by Mrs. Rossi, Vote 5-0.

The School Committee returned to Public Session – Motion by Mr. Furtado to move to open session, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Motion by Mr. Furtado and to seal the minutes of the executive session, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola.

Report Executive Session Votes - No votes taken.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee